2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

tion, a frame wood building, and the main store. On the eastern end of the village the road opens into a little square in front of the simple, open prayer house with a small concrete shrine in back, housing three sacred stones. Beyond these is the township office crowned by a mighty pine tree of tremendous and symmetric proportions, acclaimed by Taira people to be the oldest existing pine in Okinawa. Across from the office are the post office and the dispensary.

Closer inspection of the village shows former house sites which were not rebuilt. Some still have empty concrete shells or single concrete walls and abandoned pigsties or storage sheds. Some of the vacant lots are used as potato fields, others as play areas, the favorite being a large house lot surrounded by a concrete wall, near the main store.

Houses are set back a short distance from the roads and paths, and most face south. In spite of the hedges and trees, the house is easily accessible from the street—its orientation is therefore toward the community as a whole and, as will be seen later, open to visitors who can enter freely without going through winding garden paths and knocking on doors or entering through long corridors and passages. Each house lot is small, ranging from 1300 to 6050 square feet. Houses are set so close to each other that neighborly conversations from one to the other can be conducted without leaving one's premises. Although some privacy is attained by the hibiscus hedges and fences, few secrets can be kept from neighbors.

There are several focal areas where people frequently meet and interact. The main store is a geographical center. Its two bulletin boards make it a natural congregating point. The banyan tree, overshadowing the village office and the lower water tank, is another such place, and on any day of the year scores of children can be found on or under it. In prewar times it was flanked by important structures, but now the empty lots, which are adjacent, form a green which is used on good days for village meetings.

South of this green, and close to the water, stands the old warehouse, a concrete structure with tile roof which once served as a storage center for agricultural products shipped south by boat; now it serves as a village meeting playground, especially on rainy days. The open space around it, bordering on the sea wall, is also used as a play area and as a gathering place for young adults. Here people prepare firewood for sale and stack it to be picked up by the village truck. Houses once stood near the 10-foot sea wall but were not rebuilt after the war.

To the north of the store lies the upper water tank. Until several standing faucets were installed in 1955, this used to be another place where people met frequently. Water is diverted from a stream a mile

642 highly structured system; the overall impression is of rule by bureaucracy. Most importantly the average individual accepts all of this as in the natural
[181] ordering of things. The best possible relationship of the state to the people is thought to be a paternalistic one, like father to children. Such an attitude is wholly in keeping with a culture which has traditionally stressed family and community over individual, and obligations over rights.

632 'Son' Government The administrative center of every 'son' is the township office ('sonyakuba') which serves as the connecting link between the people of its villages and the central government in Naha. The main functions of this office are to transmit and implement the directives and laws of the central government to the people, to collect taxes, and to keep records---the most important of these being the household registry ('koseki') and land records ('tochi daichō'). The size of the office staff is largely determined by the township size; in the larger townships there are many departments and employees, but in a small 'son' several departments may be grouped under a single head.

632 The building housing this office is usually a single-storied structure
●344 located in the largest village of the township; a post office, school, agri-
[368] cultural office, and store are often nearby. The interior of the office building is one large room sometimes sub-divided into smaller offices by the use of screens; one end of the room is set aside for meetings. On the exterior of the building along one side the names of the various departments are above the windows. When a villager calls at the office on business, he ordinarily does not enter the building but stands outside the window appropriate to his business until a clerk or official of that department opens it and speaks to him.

632 At the head of the township government is the 'sonchō' ('son' mayor),
354 who in addition to directing its affairs functions as the liaison between the 'son' and the central government. It was the author's impression after spending considerable time in one 'son' office and visiting several others that the 'sonchō' is usually a very busy man and that he is more often away from his office than in it. In addition to directing the activities of his office, he makes numerous inspections within the township, attends meetings and conferences in other parts of the island, and once a month participates in a council of all the mayors of the municipalities, which is held in Naha. The latter enables the mayors of the municipalities to discuss common problems and to come in contact with the officials of the central government. Three times each month he meets with the mayors ('kucho') of the villages within his township for a discussion of local problems. It is said that the office can be a stepping stone for the politically ambitious since his activities bring a wide range of contacts; this cannot be said for any other office in the 'son' or 'ku'. During the course of his research on Okinawa the author met the mayors of five or six municipalities, and in all cases he was impressed by the intelligence and ability of these men. A mayor is elected for a term of four years and is eligible for reelection.

632 The chief lieutenants of the 'sonchō' are the assistant mayor ('joyaku') and the revenue officer or treasurer ('shūnyūyaku'); the latter usually directs all financial matters, and his major function is tax collection and

621 For administrative purposes villages are subdivided into sections or
179 neighborhoods called 'han' or 'kumi'. There is considerable variation in the
use of these terms throughout Okinawa, in part occasioned by the recency of
their introduction and by the confusion following the end of the war. In 1940
[648] the Japanese government ordered all municipalities ('shi-chō-son') subdivided
into 'rimpō-han' (settlement sections) which in turn were subdivided into 'tonari-
gumi' (neighborhood groups). The move was a political one designed to insure
more effective control; the divisions were often quite arbitrary and had little
relation to social groupings. The term 'kumi', however, had been in use for a
long time in both Japan and Okinawa, referring to a group of households. That
[178] these subdivisions have survived into the postwar period indicates that they
are fulfilling a function necessary to village administration.

621 A large village such as Henza (of Henza Shima), which has a population
624 of 3800, is subdivided into 5 'han' each headed by an official called 'hanchō'.
Every 'han' is subdivided into 'kumi'; there are 41 'kumi' in the village, ap-
proximately 8 to each 'han'. Each 'kumi' contains from 12-20 houses; the head
of the 'kumi' is the 'kumichō'. In a smaller village such as Kanegusuku-ku
which has a population of 507, the 'han' no longer exists; instead the term
'kumi' is applied to the four subdivisions of the village. In Kanegusuku the
'kumichō' functions as the intermediary between the 'kuchō' and the people of
the area; there are on the average 25 houses in each 'kumi'. 'Kumichō' are
elected each year by the 'kumi' though in actuality the position is really ro-
tated among the households within the 'kumi'. One of the chief functions of
the 'kumi' is to provide labor for community work projects. When the township
office requests that the 'kuchō' have his village repair a section of a road,
he calls in the 'kumichō' and tells them how many workers will be needed. The
'kumichō' notify the household heads within their 'kumi' and the households
supply in rotation the needed labor. When local clean-up is in order as pre-
paration for a township inspection, the 'kumichō' supervises the work in his
area. Tax collections for village finances are generally made by him, and when
tax collections are made by the township, he notifies his constituents as to
the time and place of payment.

The importance of the 'kumichō' or 'hanchō' is dependent on the physical
nature of the village and its size. In a small tightly-nucleated village like
Kanegusuku the 'kumichō' functions mainly as an intermediary or messenger be-
tween the 'kuchō' and the people of the 'kumi' and as a foreman on their work
details. In a larger village whose 'han' are scattered into more isolated neigh-
borhoods or settlements the 'hanchō' often functions more like a 'kuchō'. In
Kanegusuku the divisions are more or less arbitrary ones, and there is definitely
no feeling of strong identity with a particular 'kumi'. However, in the village
of Tomoyose where Pitts studied, the isolated settlement of Nanahan (literally
("Han Seven") felt itself to be a distinct unit and functioned not unlike a very
small village.

621 Most villages have a small building set aside for use as an office or
344 meeting place. These are usually called muraya in Okinawan or 'jimusho' in
Japanese. In a large village like Henza the office is nearly as large as those
of some of the smaller 'son', containing desks, telephone, records, and a full-
time staff. In Kanegusuku a small bare hut large enough for only a dozen peo-
ple suffices. When village meetings are held, the officials sit inside the
building while the people sit outside facing them. Village records are stored
in the home of the 'kuchō' or the clerk.